



FEPS

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Letter of the Past-President of FEPS

Dear Colleagues,

I took over as President of FEPS during the 3rd FEPS Congress in Nice in July 2003. A high quality meeting indeed, and for those of us who attended it was a scientifically most rewarding and pleasant Congress. Unfortunately there were too few participants present to profit from it. It was not “the platform for European physiologists” that one could have dreamt of. At the 2003 Council meeting we therefore decided to try out another format, using the FEPS participation as an “adds-on” to meetings of national Physiological Societies, to have a “guaranteed” basic level of participation and hopefully adding stronger pan-European participation and thus also a larger number of participants. This model has now been tried with two large Societies: in Bristol 2005 together with the Physiological Society (of United Kingdom and Ireland), and in Munich 2006 with the German Physiological Society. As described elsewhere in this Newsletter the latest meeting with this format was just held in Bratislava, as a meeting where three parties were involved; the Slovak Physiological Society as host and local organizer, the Physiological Society and FEPS. All these three “joint meetings” have been successes – a stronger program and more participants from the remaining parts of Europe – and the world – than would otherwise have been possible. All in all this has been a positive and successful development. Nevertheless it is still not “the platform for European physiologists”. To achieve that goal the largest national Physiological Societies must decide for themselves whether they would prefer to substitute their own annual meetings every third or four year to join forces in meetings that are truly common for several national societies – hopefully all European Physiological Societies to fulfil the dreams of FEPS and their member societies. We, physiologists, do not need *more* meetings, but perhaps *more rewarding* meetings. Meetings in specialized fields are obviously very important for all of us. If the “general” meetings shall be attractive, they need not only “quality”, but also “volume” to secure that there is enough “on the menu” for all participants. I believe that this kind of meetings serves important objectives, not least with the rapidly developing and interconnected fields in biology and the many nations in Europe. I am optimistic for the future, and I am convinced that the new President, Ulrich Pohl, and the three new members of the Executive Committee will contribute to that development. It has been a pleasure to serve the FEPS organization for the last four years. Thank you all for the support.

Hans Hultborn
Past-President



**Report of the Joint Meeting of the Slovak Physiological Society,
the Physiological Society and
the Federation of European Physiological Societies**

Bratislava, September 11-14, 2007

The joint Meeting started with the European Young Physiologists Symposium completely organized by young colleagues (and financially supported by PS and FEPS) and the FEPS Symposium on „Innovative methods in Teaching Physiology, Developments in ICT in Physiology Teaching“. In the following days 15 symposia, 24 oral sessions and 20 poster sessions took place. Three key note lectures were given by experts in the field: Profs Ole Petersen, Torben Clausen and Ian C McGrath. The conference was held on the grounds of Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of Slovak Technical University in Bratislava. It was the time of the year that regular faculty students were coming for matriculation and graduation ceremony. Near the entrance were 10 standpoints with free access to internet, wireless internet was freely accessible throughout whole building. Opening ceremony and all three honorary lectures were directly transmitted by internet. DVD's containing plenary lectures will be send to organising societies. Some of the participants took advantage of possibility to have poster printed in Bratislava with the delivery at registration.

From the approximately 500 participants electronically registered, 70% really appeared. There were several reasons not to attend, including problems to get visa in time (procedure was sometimes surprisingly complicated), illness, and financial problems. Spectrum of participants was significantly influenced by the policy of travel support awarded by PS and FEPS. Most participants (88) were of course from Slovakia and as supposed, attendance from UK was second numerous (40). It was a pleasure to notice reasonable number of scientists from Hungary and Romania, followed by Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Ukraine, France, Turkey, Italy, Poland, Belgium, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, USA, Israel, and Portugal. I hope the participants are sharing my impression that the joint meeting was characterized by excellent science combined with a friendly and creative atmosphere allowing for making many new contacts unifying European scientists.

Vladimir Strbak
for the local organizers

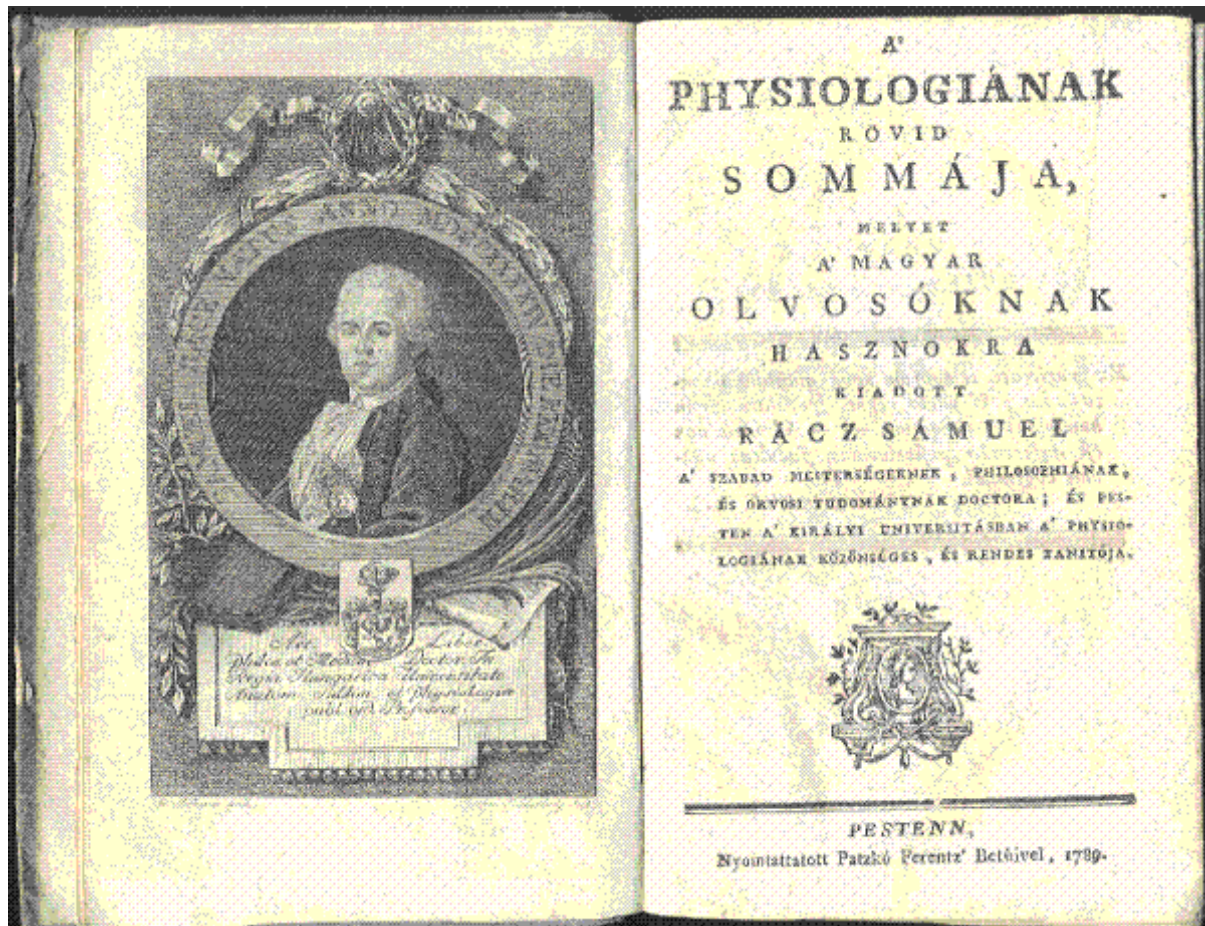
New members of the Executive Board of FEPS

The Federation of European Physiological Societies welcomes three new members of the Executive Board (ExCo). From September 2007 till 2011, Dr Bryndis Birnir (Lund University, Sweden) will serve as Treasurer of FEPS. Dr Gines Salido (University of Extramadura, Spain) and Dr Alexei Verkhatsky (Manchester University, UK and Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic) will serve as members. Dr Hans Hultborn (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) will be Past-President from 2007 till 2009 and act as Chairman of the FEPS Nominating Committee. Dr Ger van der Vusse was reelected as Secretary General and Dr Ulrich Pohl will be President of our Federation till 2011.

In memory of professor Sámuel Rác - who wrote the first Hungarian textbook in physiology – on the 200th anniversary of his death

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Sámuel Rác was born on 30th March 1744 in Gyulafehérvár from Calvinist Szekler (eastern Transylvanian) parents János Rác and Annamária Nemes. He converted to the Catholic faith in his younger years as a result of a Jesuit influence. He went to secondary school in Kolozsvár, and then studied arts in Nagyszombat, which was then the first step to higher education. At the University of Vienna he studied theology and law as a Jesuit novice, but finally he chose medicine as the object of his life. He left the order and obtained his medical doctor's degree in 1773 with his essay 'De sanitate conservanda'. The young Sámuel Rác attracted attention with outstanding exam-results. He returned to Hungary in the year of his graduation and became a royal and municipal chief health officer in Nagybánya. A year later he was also entrusted with the medical post of the treasury. In the same year he married Borbála Rumbach, the daughter of the chief medical officer of Pest, Sebestyén Rumbach, who came from Nagybánya.

From 1st November 1777 as an extraordinary lecturer he gave lectures on pathology to medical students specializing in surgery at the Faculty of Medicine in Buda. In 1783 he was appointed as a university professor of physiology and 'higher anatomy' (histology). At the Department of Physiology he gave lectures till his death. His well-known physiology book was published in 1789. A famous Hungarian poet, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, greeted him in 1793 with a poem titled: 'To the Famous Mr. Sámuel Rác':

"Sir, the Hungarian nation
Rejoices, as it can hear the
Present-day sons of Asclepius
Speak Hungarian;
And as Hippocrates took off his

Greek-style clothes and changed them
 To a Hungarian gown
 And even took a liking to it
”
 (Translated by Mrs Szabóné Zs Rudnai)

(In Hungarian:
 „Uram örvendez a magyar
 Haza, hogy a mostani
 Eskuláp fiait hallja
 Magyar hangon szólani;
 Hogy görög-módi ruháit
 Hippokrates letette
 S magyar köntösre váltotta
 S már azt is megszerette
”)

As a pioneer in experimental physiology, he carried out remarkable studies in the field of lymph flow: ‘Even though, I sometimes pushed the mercury from the lactiferous vessels to the fimbria (villi) and never saw it pour to any other cells, which means the lactiferous vessels take their source in the fimbria.’

At the university he also taught internal medicine (1785/86), theoretical medicine and state medicine (1802/03), as well as anatomy (1805/07). As an enlightened intellectual he considered developing the Hungarian medical professional terminology as a very important aim in his life. He published textbooks in Hungarian, which were partly written by him, partly translated in nearly every branch of medical training of that time.

Sámuel Rác wrote 25 scientific works, from which 12 were written in Hungarian and the others in Latin, German and Greek. He could also speak and write in French. His main works:

- “A textbook on the general knowledge of human life”. (In Hungarian: Az emberi élet általános ismeretét tanító könyv, Buda, 1772);
- “Medical teaching, in which the symptoms and the cure of the most frequent and most common internal diseases are described”. (In Hungarian: Orvosi oktatás, melyben a leggyakrab és legközönségesebb belső nyavalyáknak jelei és orvosságai röviden leíratnak, Buda, 1776);
- “A short summation of physiology”. (In Hungarian: A physiologiának rövid sommája, Pest, 1789);
- “Medical practice, that is: The description of diseases and their cure”. (In Hungarian: Orvosi praxis, vagyis: A betegségeknek leírása és orvoslása, Buda, 1801).

He was Dean of Faculty for four academic years and the Rector of the University for one year (1793/94) and was given the title of ‘Royal Councilor’. Several foreign scientific societies elected him to be a member. He died 200 years ago in Pest on 24th February 1807 at the age of 63. The Hungarian Society of Physiology founded the Sámuel Rác Commemorative Medal in 1985 in honor of his pioneer work in writing the first university textbook in Hungarian.

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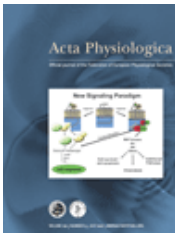
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